



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**  
St. Louis District®

# Press Release

Release No. 27-05

Contact: Public Affairs Office  
314-331-8095/8068

For Release: **IMMEDIATE** – December 21, 2005

---

1222 Spruce Street, St. Louis, Missouri 63103-2833

## **Dredging Season on Middle Mississippi Comes to a Close**

ST. LOUIS – A successful dredging season has drawn to a close for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis District. The District's Dredge Potter has arrived at the Corps' Service Base at the Foot of Arsenal in St. Louis and is currently demobilizing its crew. The contract Dredge America completed its work December 13 and is wintering below the Kaskaskia Lock and Dam near River Mile 118 on the Upper Mississippi River.

Due to existing and expected low water conditions, the District's Dredge Potter was activated July 29, 13 days before its scheduled activation. Dredge America, a contract dredge owned and operated by Great Lakes Dredge and Dock Company of Oak Brook, Ill., was activated August 1, also earlier than scheduled.

Together the two dredges have completed 40 jobs, removing over 7.9 million cubic yards of sediment from the navigation channel. Lance Engle, dredging project manager for the St. Louis District, explained that would be enough sediment to fill the recently demolished Busch Stadium from field level to the top three times and then some.

Removing that sediment ensures that even at the low water reference plane, there is a minimum of 9 feet of water in the navigation channel. For instance the LWRP for St. Louis' gage is a -3.5 feet. This morning the gage was at a -0.9, making channel depth approximately 11.6 feet at that location.

The District is responsible for maintaining a 9-foot navigation channel on 300 miles of the Mississippi River from Saverton, Mo., to Cairo, Ill., on the lower 80 miles of the Illinois River and the lower 36 miles of the Kaskaskia River. Through dredging operations, locks and dams and channel improvement structures, such as dikes and chevrons, the District is able to accomplish this mission.

Jim Pierce, captain of the Dredge Potter, is proud of the job his crew has done this year. "We have completed 27 jobs on over 250 miles of river," Capt. Pierce said. "The crew responded quickly to shallow areas and pumped a lot of sand. Working 24 hours, 7 days a week, the crew has worked very hard. I am very pleased with the job they've done."

-more-

Industry is pleased too, according to Sammy Dickey, chairman of the River Industry Action Committee, a coalition of tow companies and other navigation interests.

"I've been in recent contact with several tow companies and they are very pleased with the channel's condition," Dickey said. "The dredging crews have done an excellent job preparing the channel for this season's low water conditions. The industry is heavily reliant on their work, and their efforts ensure that millions of dollars worth of commodities make it to their final destination."

While the dredges are wintering for the season, they could be reactivated if the need arises. Capt. Pierce explained it would take two to four days to reassemble the crew, order supplies, fuel and food, and refit the dredge so it could start work again. "As soon as we can mobilize, we would head out to the job and start dredging," he said.

Remobilization would only take place though if there was an imminent channel closure or a tow grounding and the channel was closed, explained Engle. The District's dredging project manager went on to explain that ice could play a factor in the dredge's ability to remobilize.

"If we start to see ice flows in St. Louis, we probably wouldn't dredge," Engle said. Ice conditions hamper dredging operations, as ice will clog water intakes and larger ice flows can damage the pipeline. It also puts pressure on the dredge's buoy cables, possibly causing them to break.

"Basically, once we see ice in St. Louis, we are stuck with the river we have," he said. "That's why we work so hard to complete dredging operations prior to late December."

Constantly fluctuating river levels require a close working relationship between U.S. Army Corps of Engineers personnel, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Weather Service and the river industry. Just since July the river has fluctuated from a high of 11.8 feet to a low of -3.5 at the St. Louis gage.

As required, low water teleconferences are conducted with all parties to discuss current and expected river levels. A low water advisory, issued Monday by the U.S. Coast Guard, is currently in effect and specifies restrictions to tow sizes and draft for the Upper Mississippi River (See the latest U.S. Coast Guard navigation notice at <http://www.ribb.com/navnotice.html>).